

Sunday – February 19, 2017

Preparation

Israel has been wandering in the wilderness for about two years and much has happened in their lives. There have been births but also deaths; there have been lessons taught and learned; there have been laws, commands and statutes given and judgments passed; there have been miracles witnessed and priests appointed; it has been a long journey that for these people must have seemed would never end. What they did not understand is that everything they experienced was to prepare them for the day of rest; the day they would enter the Promised Land. The number one or preeminent lesson to be learned is TRUST in GOD; to trust Him enough to obey Him even when it doesn't make sense; trust Him especially when the odds are against them; to trust Him particularly for each and every need. The question is, have they so learned? Are they ready to enter that blessed land of Canaan? Or do they still have more lessons to learn? In this week's reading we find out.

We will also see how serious God is about obedience to all His commands as He commands one to be stoned to death for his disobedience. How seriously is God against those who murmur and make false accusations against the man of God? We find out as God makes a "new thing" (Numbers 16:30) to bring about the deaths of the guilty. We will also hear the words of a beast as her master strikes her three separate times to the saving of his life (Numbers 22:28), and many other wondrous things as Israel continues to be prepared for their entrance into Canaan. But it will not be without great trials over which the LORD proves victorious time and time again.

You too, are being prepared for that day when you will stand face to face before our Almighty God. Every trial you face, every situation you are in, and every victory you experience is all in preparation of an eternity with Jesus. That eternity began the day you were saved. Our journey, after our new birth, is to prepare us "Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:" (Ephesians 4:13). So the worship we will do there begins here on earth. Once again, don't let anything hinder your worship today, and everyday, whether it is gathering with other believers around the preaching of His word, or if it is driving in your car to work. May we all be cognizant of our eternal purpose to bring glory and honour to God.

TODAY'S READING: NUMBERS 13-15

OVERVIEW:

The 12 spies sent into Canaan; their report; Moses' intercessory prayer for the children of Israel; God's pardon, but refusal to allow Israel to enter the Promised Land; laws concerning offerings, sins, and the Sabbath.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Leaving the wilderness of Sinai, the children of Israel were led northward until they reached Kadesh-barnea, the southern tip of the land of Canaan. For the first time, they were actually able to see the land God had promised to them. Before going into possess the land, a leader from each of the 12 tribes was chosen to spy out the land for 40 days.

As the 12 spies brought back their report, there was complete agreement that Canaan was, indeed, "a land that flowed with milk and honey" (13:27), but 10 said that overcoming the obstacles in the land was an utter impossibility. Only Joshua and Caleb said, *"Let us go up at once, and possess it for we are able to overcome it"* (13:30). As one writer so aptly put it, *"The ten put the difficulty between themselves and God. The two put God between themselves and the difficulty. The ten saw with the eye of the flesh. The two saw with the eye of the faith."*

The outcome is history. Israel first refused to believe, then rebelled, even suggesting that Joshua and Caleb be stoned, and that a new leader be appointed to lead them all back to Egypt. The result: 38 years of wandering in the wilderness. (Note: A total of 40 years, one year for each day the spies were in Canaan – Num. 14:33-34.) And what a tragedy! The entire generation of people who were age 20 and above at the time of their glorious exodus from Egypt was condemned to die in the wilderness, having never experienced God's purpose in bringing them out. They picture many (most?) believers today, who like Israel, refuse to trust God's promise to grant them victory over their enemies (the world, the flesh, and the Devil), and refused to trust God to grant them entrance into the fullness of life, rest, fruit, and blessing in Christ (Canaan).

As we begin chapter 15, God begins the transitional part of the Book of Numbers (chapters 15-20), which covers the 38 years of wilderness wanderings where the

old generation died off. To help us understand just how much “dying” actually took place, Dr. Leon Wood (A Survey of Israel’s History) notes:

“Figuring 1,200,000 (600,000 of both men and women) as having to die in 14,508 days (38 1/2 years), gives 85 per day. Figuring 12 hours per day maximum for funerals, gives an average of seven funerals per hour for all 38 1/2 years, a continuous foreboding reminder of God’s punishment upon them.”

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

As the GLORY OF GOD – Num. 14:22 (Heb. 1:3; John 1:14; II Cor. 4:6)

TODAY'S READING: NUMBERS 16-19

OVERVIEW:

Korah leads a rebellion against Moses and Aaron; the plague of judgment sent by God; duties for the priests; the tithe offering; the sacrifice of the red heifer.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

The complaints that were hurled against Moses in chapter 12 came from his own brother and sister. The uprising against him in chapter 16 comes from his own cousins, Korah, Dathan, and Abram. The sad thing is that Korah, the ringleader of the rebellion, was able to negatively influence 250 of the leaders of Israel against Moses and Aaron.

Their accusations against Moses and Aaron, the God-ordained authorities in Israel, was that they assumed too much authority, and that there were others, namely THEM (!), who were deserving of an equal voice in the decisions that were made for the nation. They, no doubt, were assured that they were right, and that they were seeking to champion the “Lord’s cause”, and a cause that was for the “good of the people.” They were wrong. Dead wrong! In fact, verse 11 reveals that their actual rebellion wasn’t against the authority of Moses and Aaron but against the authority of the Lord Himself! (“... *both thou and all thy company are gathered together against the Lord*” – (16:11). As the Lord recounts this story in Numbers 26:9, He says that, “*they strove against the Lord.*”

It is interesting to note that Moses and Aaron did not seek to defend themselves. They let God be their defense (Psalm 59:9). Moses instructs Korah and his 250 rebels to bring censers (the pots used for burning incense) to the Tabernacle so that God could reveal who was right in the dispute. The object lesson was incredible. The ground opened up and swallowed Korah, Dathan, Abram, and as the 250 princes offered their incense, God breathed out fire and they themselves went up in smoke!

One would think that the supernatural intervention of God confirming the authority of Moses and Aaron, would have caused the people to willfully and joyfully submit. Rather, they murmured once again, actually blaming Moses and Aaron for the killing of Korah and all his cohorts! Wow! Needless to say, God was not pleased. He instructs Moses and Aaron to back off so that He could consume every last one of the murmurers. Moses (what a guy!), rather than relish in God’s

judgment on the people, instructs Aaron to offer atonement for them so that the people would be spared. Before Aaron can offer the atonement, however, 14,700 people were killed!!!

Evidently, even the events of chapter 16 weren't enough to convince the people of Aaron's authority in the priesthood. In chapter 17, God wants to settle the issue once and for all. God instructs Moses to tell each tribe to present a rod (a dead stick) to be placed in front of the Ark in the Tabernacle. The rod that blossomed would indicate the one He had chosen for the priesthood. Obviously, Aaron's rod was the only one that budded – but not only that, in a single day, it budded, blossomed, and bore fruit! The other rods were still as dead as a door nail. While each of the princes took back his lifeless rod, the rod of Aaron was placed in the Tabernacle before the Ark to be a constant reminder to the rebels of the nation who the one High Priest of Israel actually was.

Aaron's rod, of course, is a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Many religious leaders and teachers have arisen throughout the course of time. They all had one thing in common: they died! Only One rose from the dead! He alone is the Source and Giver of life, our Great High Priest!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In AARON'S BUDDING ROD – Num. 17:1-8 (I Cor. 15:20; Acts 17:3: 26:23) In AARON AND HIS SONS who were responsible to bear the iniquity of the people in the sanctuary – Num. 18:1 (Isa. 53:4-7; Titus 2:14) In the RED HEIFER which was to be offered as a cleansing from defilement.

It was to be without spot or blemish – Num. 19:2 (Christ was *“without blemish and without spot”* – I Pet. 1:19)

It was to have never born a yoke – Num. 19:2 (A yoke is put on an animal to subdue its wild nature and compel subjection. Christ needed no yoke, but came saying, *“Lo, I come to do thy will, O God”* – Heb. 10:7)

It was to be red – Num. 19:2 (A picture of the blood of Christ – Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 1:2, 19)

It was to be slain without (outside) the camp – Num. 19:3 (Christ was crucified on Golgotha, a place outside of the city of Jerusalem – John 19:17)

It's blood was to be sprinkled seven times before the Tabernacle – Num. 19:4 (Seven is the number of completion and perfection in the Bible. Christ offered one complete and perfect sacrifice for sin – Heb. 10:12, 14)

TODAY'S READING: NUMBERS 20-24

OVERVIEW:

Miriam's death; Moses strikes the rock twice; Edom refuses to allow Israel passage on their land; Aaron's death; the judgment of the fiery serpents; the serpent of brass; Israel defeats King Arad, the Amorites, and the Moabites; Balaam is hired to curse the Israelites; the prophecies of Balaam.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapter 20 marks the end of Israel's wandering in the wilderness. The death of Aaron, which takes place in this chapter, happened in the fortieth year after the Children of Israel came up out of Egypt (see Num. 3:38), and from this point, Israel either marched or halted, but did not wander.

It is significant that this chapter groups together three significant events: **1)** Miriam's death; **2)** Moses sin (striking the rock twice); **3)** Aaron's death. These three events point to the fact that Aaron, representative of the priesthood, could not successfully lead Israel into the land of promise and rest; nor could Miriam, representative of the Prophets; nor could Moses, representative of the Law. The way into the Promised Land was to be led by Joshua, whom we will see as we study the Book that bears his name, is an incredible type of the Lord Jesus Christ (note: Joshua is the Hebrew rendering of the name Jesus!).

The reason God was so stern with Moses about disobeying His command to speak to the rock is revealed in I Corinthians 10:4. That wasn't just *any* rock. That Rock was Christ! The Rock had already been smitten once (Ex. 17:5), and God didn't want it smitten again. Striking it again would imply that Christ's one sacrifice on the Cross wasn't sufficient to pay for man's sin. Because of Moses' defilement of the type, he was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. (Husbands, take note, God does not take kindly when someone spoils the picture of His Son! You, too, are a picture of Christ in your relationship to your wife (Eph. 5:22-32). Unless your relationship with your wife is right, it will be as impossible for you to enter Canaan (the fullness of life in Christ) as it was for Moses.)

Chapter 21 presents another incredible picture of Christ. The people had been bitten with the fiery serpents because of two sins: They spoke against God, and they spoke against Moses. Because of their sin, they were dying (Num. 21:5-6). In like fashion, we are sinners because we have sinned against God, and

because we have sinned against our fellow man (Mark 12:30-31). Because of our sin, we have been bitten by the fiery serpent of sin, and are destined to die (Rom. 6:23a – *“the wages of sin is death”*).

God’s remedy in Israel was a serpent of brass that was to be lifted up on a pole among the people, and all who looked to it were delivered from death to life. In John 3:14, Jesus said, *“And AS Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him (i.e. look to Him in faith) should not perish, but have eternal life.”*

In chapters 22- 24 is the strange story of Balaam and Balak. Balak tried to hire Balaam to curse the Children of Israel, but every time he opened his mouth to do so, much to his surprise and Balak’s anger, out came blessing!

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the ROCK which Moses struck – Num. 20:8-11; Ex. 17:6 (Christ, the Rock – I Cor. 10:4, was struck once through His death on the cross, and does not need to be struck again. Rom. 6:10 – *“For in that he died, he died unto sin once.”*)

In the SERPENT OF BRASS – Num. 21:8-9 (John 3:14). In the prophesied STAR and SCEPTER – Num. 24:17 (Heb. 1:8 – scepter; Rev. 22:16 – star).

TODAY S READING: NUMBERS 25-27

OVERVIEW:

Israel s sin of fornication; God s judgment in the plague of death; the plague halted because of the zeal of Phinehas; the second numbering (census) of Israel; the law of inheritance; Moses views the Promised Land; Moses installs Joshua as Israel s leader.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

As we saw in yesterday s reading, Balak was bound and determined to get Balaam to curse Israel. Because Balaam wanted the money and honor that Balak promised him for doing so, he tried to curse them repeatedly, but God would only allow him to speak blessing.

Since Balaam couldn t curse them, he suggests a way to put the Children of Israel in a situation where God Himself would curse them. God outlines Balaam s simple plan in His commentary on Numbers 25:1-8 found in Revelation 2:14 that He calls *the doctrine of Balaam*.

1. He taught Balak how to cause the Children of Israel *to eat things sacrificed to idols*. 2. He taught Balak how to cause the Children of Israel *to commit fornication*.

Though Balaam wasn t successful in getting God to turn away from Israel, he was successful in getting Israel to turn away from God. He wickedly suggests to Balak, king of Moab, that the Moabite women make friends with the men of Israel. (Keep James 4:4 in mind – *Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?*) The friendliness of the Moabite women quickly led the Israelite men *as an ox goeth to the slaughter* (Prov. 7:22), right into sexual immorality and idol worship. Israel s disobedience resulted in a plague of death that swept through the camp of Israel, and when it was all said and done, 24,000 people were killed (25:9)!

The hero of this whole tragedy was Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron. One Israelite was as so bold in his sin and lust, he actually brought one of the Midianite women into Israel s camp to have a physical relationship with her right in Moses face. Phinehas came into the tent and thrust both of them through with a javelin while in the very act. God honors the zeal of Phinehas by turning away the plague of death before any others were killed, and by giving him a covenant

of peace and everlasting priesthood. Phinehas gives new meaning to *Blessed are the peacemakers* !

In chapter 26, God calls for the second numbering, or census, of the people in the Book of Numbers. At this point, all of the 603,550 men included in the first census are dead, except Joshua, Caleb, and Moses (and at this point, he wasn't long for this world either!). The total of the second census was 601,730 ...1820 fewer than the first census taken some 38 years previous. Catch the pitifulness of Numbers 26:63-65.

Another significant event was to take place before Israel was to enter the Promised Land. God wanted Moses to do two things:

1. To go up to Mount Abarim so that he could view the land he had been forbidden to enter (27:12-14). (Imagine what must have been going through Moses heart at that moment!)
2. To install Joshua as the new leader (26:15-23).

Chapter 27 ends with Moses blessing Joshua, and laying his hands upon him, symbolically transferring his leadership, which God had entrusted to him.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In JOSHUA, who would lead people likened to sheep which have no shepherd – Num. 27:17 (Mark 6:34; I Pet. 2:25)

TODAY'S READING: NUMBERS 28-32

OVERVIEW:

The daily and weekly offerings: the Sabbath and monthly offerings, and the offerings to be given at the appointed feasts; God's instruction concerning vows; God's judgment upon the Midianites; the division of the booty obtained from the Midianites; the officers and captains bring an offering to the Lord; Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh settle east of the Jordan.

HIGHLIGHTS & INSIGHTS:

Chapters 28 and 29 deal with the subject of the Lord's offerings, and really are an amplification of the instructions already given in Leviticus 23. Keep in mind that all of the offerings speak of Christ, and find their fulfillment in Him (Matt. 5:17). Understanding that makes Numbers 28:2 beautifully significant as God speaks of these offerings as "My bread." It is in Christ that the Father "feeds," and has found His delight, and perfect satisfaction (Matt. 4:17).

In chapter 30, God talks about the seriousness of making vows to Him. He wants to make certain that His people did not enter into a vow with Him lightly, or take the breaking of the vow lightly. Though we are not instructed to make vows, as such, in the New Testament, wasn't our very salvation a sacred "vow" of sorts, as we recognized that our lives were not our own because of the price Christ paid to redeem us, and we exchanged our life, for His? (I Cor. 6:19-20; Matt. 16:24) The purpose of God's command to go to war against Midian in chapter 31 was two-fold:

- . 1) To "*avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites.*" (31:2)
- . 2) To "*avenge the Lord of Midian.*" (31:3)
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It was to "avenge the children of Israel" and "the Lord" because the Midianites had devastated Israel, not as "enemies" in a physical war, but as "friends" in a spiritual war. The idol worshipping Midianites seduced the Children of Israel into committing "spiritual adultery" against the Lord, and became involved in "physical adultery" with their women. It had resulted in the death of 24,000 Israelites (Num. 25:9).

In this war that God designed it was to provide human retaliation and Divine retribution; three significant things stand out:

- . 1) The easiness of the victory.

- . 2) The enormity of the spoil.
- . 3) The absence of the loss of life. (Not one of the Israelites was killed.)

Keep in mind that like Israel, we have been called to war against our physical enemy (the flesh – Gal. 5:17), and against our spiritual enemy (the devil and his principalities and powers – Eph. 6:10-17). As we, like Israel in Num. 31, walk in obedience to the Word of God and appropriate the victory, we can expect a similar result.

In chapter 32, Reuben and Gad approach Moses for permission to settle in a piece of property recently acquired on the east of Jordan. They had set their affection on what they could see with their “physical eyes” (note in 32:1 – “*and when they saw*”), rather than what God had in store for them in the Promised Land that required the “eyes of faith.” From a human standpoint, their request was very reasonable, and made all the sense in the world financially, but spiritually, it was an act of selfishness and compromise. Israel’s place was inside Canaan, not outside. That was the whole purpose of the exodus — to bring them into a new land (Deut. 6:23). God wanted the entire nation, in unity, to enter the land, and for all of Israel to desire to be near the Tabernacle, and thus, in His presence. We see the result of their choice in I Chronicles 5:18-26 and II Kings 15:29. It wasn’t long before they bowed themselves to the gods of the people around them, and they were the first to go into captivity.

Obviously, these tribes are a graphic picture of self-indulgent, worldly Christians who foolishly set their affection on things on earth rather than on the things above (Col. 3:1-2), allowing physical or financial advantages to be their first consideration, and the key factor in making the decisions of life. Like Israel, our place is in Canaan, not in this world. We are to be living in this world, but all the while seeking the things which are above, driven by our affection being set on things above, lest we, like Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh, be overtaken by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

CHRIST IS REVEALED:

In the TABERNACLES – Num. 29:12-39 (Compare Num. 29:12 with Lev. 23:24) – John 1:14 (“*The Word was made flesh and DWELT among us...*” Note that the word “dwelt” is the word “tabernacle,” meaning “to temporarily live in a tent.”)
 In MOSES, the RIGHTEOUS JUDGE of the wicked – Num. 31:1-17 (Rev. 16:5; 19:11; II Thess. 1:7- 9; Jude 14-15)

Saturday – February 25, 2017

Reflection

We've taken quite the journey with the nation of Israel through our ONE in the word this week. We've seen Israel longing for Egypt. We've seen Moses and Aaron paint an incredible picture of our Lord Jesus Christ (Numbers 16:8). We then see Moses fall by making a fleshly split-second decision filled with frustration. God then takes us back to the reasons behind why many were overthrown in the wilderness, therefore causing them to not to enter into the promised land. Finally, we find a glimmer of hope with 2 men, who "wholly followed the LORD" (Numbers 32:12).

In reflecting back, there was much for us to learn and apply to our lives. This Book, our Bible, should continue to amaze us in the lessons provided as "examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (1 Corinthians 10:6). Let us be reminded on this day of "reflection" that Israel, as we've already discussed, is a picture of the individual believer in the church. That being said, as we read each day, understand, with God there is always something for us to learn, and therefore, apply to ourselves in our daily walk with Christ.

To close out this week, there is one more verse we read this week to, perhaps, meditate on and, even further, take into consideration as we prepare to gather together with our church body and sing praises, lift up His name, and prepare our hearts and minds with the word of God through the preaching of such. Check out Numbers 30:2 "If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth." Let this verse be a simple reminder to us, as men of God, to be careful of the words that proceed out of our mouths. We can all agree that we are free, under grace, by the blood our Lord Jesus Christ.

However, let's never think that God does not take our words, our vows seriously. We can all further agree that we expect God to keep his promises and the vows He has made through His word. Why should He expect anything less from us?

SCRIPTURE REFLECTION:

Numbers 14:4 “And they said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt.”

Numbers 16:48 “And he stood between the dead and the living; and the plague was stayed.”

Numbers 22:12 “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

Numbers 26:64 “But among these there was not a man of them whom Moses and Aaron the priest numbered, when they numbered the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sinai.”

Numbers 32:12 “Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed the LORD.”